

December 4, 2006

Press Release | Contact: Danielle Langone (202) 225-6416

WASHINGTON, DC—In a letter today, U.S. Congressman Peter DeFazio and other members of the Oregon delegation strongly urged congressional leaders to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act of 2000 before this year's legislative session ends. The successful "county payments" program provides stable funding for rural schools and communities as well as for popular forest management projects.

Of Oregon's 36 counties, 32 received payments through the program totaling over \$273 million in 2005. Payments are based on historical timber harvest levels. Because of the large amount of timber historically harvested from federal lands in Oregon, Oregon counties have received significant payments from the funding formula, with the 4th District receiving the most.

In addition to DeFazio, the letter was signed by Senators Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith, and Representatives Earl Blumenauer, Darlene Hooley, Greg Walden and David Wu.

The text of the letter follows.

December 4, 2006

The Honorable Bill Frist
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Colleagues:

As Congress approaches the conclusion of the 109th Congress, we implore you to not adjourn sine die without reauthorizing the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act

of 2000 (P.L. 106-393). Its reauthorization is noncontroversial and must be accomplished to avoid the economic and social damage this law's expiration will cause in over 700 counties nationwide located in more than 40 states.

Reauthorization of P.L. 106-393 will continue a very successful program providing stable funding for rural schools and communities as well as popular forest management projects. The problem has been finding budgetary offsets for this mandatory spending law. We have worked with the Administration, Republican and Democrat leaders on this problem for the past two years and yet reached no agreeable conclusions. We respectfully submit that you apply collections similar to the government contractor loophole closure in the Tax Increase Prevention and Reconciliation Act of 2005 or a very small budget cut across the board of all the agencies to pay for this highly important, highly successful program. The estimated cost of extending this program is approximately \$500 million per year, including a portion to be paid out of timber receipts.

We have attached a copy of the letter sent by the National Governors Association urging your immediate support for reauthorization of this program. Clearly, a law important enough to be supported by all 50 state governors, and all 55 U.S. Governors in the Association, deserves our collective attention in the last hours of the 109th Congress.

Please do not allow this law to expire with the 109th Congress. Please keep faith with the 100-year-old promise made to our forest dependent rural schools and communities.

Sincerely,

/s/

Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress

Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator

Gordon H. Smith
U.S. Senator

Greg Walden
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Darlene Hooley
Member of Congress

David Wu

Member of Congress